

opinions

The Oscars:

Dreadful designs & borrowed jewels

NORMALLY, I curse at the television on this night of nights for the poor representation of the film medium, yet another playing field for American cultural domination. But this time I was struck by something deeper than the ostentatious display of dreadful designer fashions and borrowed jewels.

It began with Kirk Douglas' appearance to receive a special achievement award. Douglas, who recently suffered a stroke, bravely accepted the award to a standing ovation. His sons in the audience were visibly moved, but more interesting were the looks of something not unlike shock and embarrassment as the camera panned the crowd. The plastic world of glamour would prefer to remember Spartacus' muscular, scantily clad form rather than the present elderly gentleman whose face is partially paralyzed. Hollywood is not a place for aging, you'd best do that in some private country estate and let the young stand in the spotlight.

Then there was the annual memorial to members of the industry who have passed away over the last year, most notably Gene Kelly. As the clips of familiar faces in varying shades of celluloid were shown, I began thinking of the part these people play in our lives. Our icons and idols. Perhaps the best thing achieved by the Oscars is the tribute to their contributions, in front of or behind the camera. Honour to the dead, if not the dying.

But for me, the highlight of the night was the unexpected appearance of Christopher Reeve. I was never a devoted fan, but the news last year of Reeve's tragic accident — leaving him paralyzed — left a sadness in me, for who among us could have imagined Superman immobilized by anything less than kryptonite? Alone on the stage, he was received with a standing ovation, this one seemingly more genuine than that for Douglas. After all, Christopher Reeve's return made us all believe again that

Superman is invincible. He showed tremendous courage and even greater dignity, and spoke about an issue dear to my own heart, the moral obligation of Hollywood. He celebrated the accomplishments of films such as *Silkwood*, *Philadelphia*, *Schindler's List*, and others, urging filmmakers to continue to speak out on controversial issues, because the means and the technology exist and it is only the commitment to speaking out about the truth that is required.

It is this aspect of cinema which I appreciate. Being a member of generation X, film (and television) have been a major influence on my own understanding of the world around me. Cinema is an undeniable influence in today's global village, contributing to an increasingly universal awareness and culture. I myself have discovered poetry, literature, and music as a result of their use in film. Movies that speak to us encourage us to expand our own lives with issues we may not otherwise have given time or thought to. When done with dignity, films give us visions of other cultures, of world issues like poverty, racism, inequality, injustice, censorship, oppression, and revolution. This is evidenced by films such as *And the Band Played On*, *Boyz in the Hood*, *Beyond Rangoon*, *The Killing Fields*, *Longtime Companion*, *Mississippi Burning*, *In the Name of the Father*, *Platoon*, *Sarafina*, *Shoah*, *Torchsong Trilogy*, *the White Rose*, and many others.

The glamour of Hollywood is of little interest when compared to the power of Hollywood. Of course, sometimes we all want to see a happy ending, but there is an increasing need (in my opinion) for films of conscience and substance. And also a need for icons with the dignity of Christopher Reeve, who demonstrated to Hollywood the courage of Superman by coming forward with the cape and tights replaced by a wheelchair. Lessons for the bold and the beautiful.

SIVAN OREV

Who needs grace anyway?

I read the Gazette of two weeks ago, especially the Blacks on Blacks article, with some trepidation. I'd gotten some really negative feedback about it and when I read it, I had to sit down and gauge my reaction. Some of my friends really took it like a "Oh jeppers, here's another black guy whining," but I really thought about it. Colwyn made me uncomfortable with what he said, but he made some pretty astute observations I think that everyone can relate to — it's too bad people wrote off his ideas, and him to an extent, because he is black.

It doesn't just happen to Colwyn. We write people off all the time. Someone messes up and we shoot them down and leave them to rot — I mean, hey! They crossed us, didn't they? They deserve it and whatever crap they catch for it.

We're "generation X," and we're supposedly the most open-minded generation yet. SURE. We

write people off when they have no further use to us. We adore the stars, the really cool people like Kurt Cobain, the people who are so easy to like, but I'm disappointed in my generation because we don't care about people who are hard to love. It bothered me that I wrote off the guys who are holding the Africville protest as weirdo extremists. The truth is, they're addressing an event which hasn't been appropriately dealt with in Halifax. There needs to be some forgiveness from both sides.

It bothers me that it's OK for Elizabeth Taylor, a media goddess, to divorce seven or eight husbands after cheating on a few of them, but when Jimmy Swaggart watches a striptease in a hotel room, we pronounce our final and eternal judgment on him as the worst hypocrite alive. Who needs grace, anyway?

They both did crappy things, but how is it that we're so two-faced that one's a heroine

and the other's doomed to live with our moral sentence hanging over his head for the rest of his life? Where are the open minds? Are we innocent of all charges personally? How did we ever end up with stones to throw? Who among us hasn't stabbed someone else in the back or lied or cheated or stolen or something?

If all there is to our mortal existence is adhering to our own brand of morality, adapting it as we go along, and being a "good person," then who really cares? We write someone off each time it changes. I'm thankful that there is grace for everyone that forgives and forgets, because I'm guilty on all charges. I wonder if I was found to be a homosexual paedophile or killer-rapist, how open your mind would be. It wouldn't be. Get some grace while you're still breathing — it's the oil that loosens the hinges of the mind so everyone can come in.

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blacksonblack

A weekly column by students of Afrikan descent, sponsored by a joint committee of the African Students' Association, Black Canadian Students' Association, and the Black United Students. The opinion expressed below does not necessarily reflect the views of the aforementioned societies.

IN short, we need to create a whole new way of viewing ourselves. The racist ideology that is poisoning Black minds and turning us against each other needs to be completely destroyed and a new and revolutionary Afrocentric ideology erected in its place. In order to be successful, this ideology must touch every aspect of human activity, from religion and romance to education and employment. If we do not adopt this stance and choose instead to approach this many-headed beast of white supremacy (or racism, the two terms are interchangeable) without adequately addressing the interrelated elements that facilitate its power, Black life will ultimately be reduced to a deadly game of chance, with the odds stacked heavily against us.

It is the responsibility of every Black person at home and throughout the Diaspora — and in particular those privileged

enough to grace the hallowed halls of higher learning with their presence — to dedicate themselves to the eradication of racism. For example, if you are studying economics, you should use your learning to create programs to move ailing Black communities out of a position of economic stagnation; if you are pursuing a career in education, you should be prepared to challenge our chronic invisibility in school texts with positive and progressive curricula designed specifically for OUR unique needs; and, if you aim to enter the communication field as a journalist or writer, it is imperative that you produce works that do not seek to denigrate or marginalize Black culture. These and other such examples constitute the utilization of education as a means for freedom from the many occidental fetters of western democracy and we must fight with the tools we are given.

Brothers and Sisters, we must realize that we are in part responsible for the creation of wretched souls like 'Tom' (and countless other manifestations of Black self-hatred). Our inaction, in a society which daily reaffirms its commitment to our destruction, is nothing short of a criminal offense. If we — the educated elite — cannot use our considerable skills to create an alternative way of thinking for the express benefit of our people, then the time spent in university is all for naught.

Think about it, Black people. Depending on the choice that you make and the action that you take, you will either become the co-conspirators in the systematic elimination of our Black tomorrows, or the hands of salvation which pluck the wounded minds (and bodies) of our fallen Brothers and Sisters from the rabid jaws of a diseased world.

C. BURCHALL

letters

appropriate measures be taken. Today, no guidelines exist for controlled dumping of environmental contaminants. The rising levels of metals, and organic and microbiological contaminants will have drastic repercussions on the local ecosystem.

Being an estuary, Halifax Harbour traps the dense sewage and forces the harmful contaminants to settle on the bottom. Diverse species of fish, shellfish, mammals, and plants inhabit Halifax Harbour. While the current rate of environmental contamination is not posing an immediate threat to these populations, the species are constantly absorbing high levels of toxins and have become unfit for human consumption. In addition, lesions and tumours have been observed on Harbour species. An increase in the population and industrial activity within the metro area will increase the levels of contaminants in the Harbour, inevitably stressing the ecosystem. Pathogenic viruses may invade the water system and potentially have drastic effects on human health.

The cost of sewage treatment has been estimated at \$385 million. However, less costly options do exist. Nitrogen and phosphorus components of the sewage can be used as fertilizers in both agriculture and aquaculture. This would remove many heavy toxins in the sludge that covers the floor of the Halifax Harbour. These however are only options, not solutions.

Active government intervention is required to fix what has already damaged the Harbour to improve its aesthetic, tourism, and recreational function. In order to preserve the ecosystem, we all must help to control industrial pollution and to monitor individual dumping. Learn how to properly dispose of household chemicals, get involved, speak your concerns...it's your future, it's your city, it's your Harbour, it's your choice.

Concerned Dalhousie Biology Students
Rep: Natalie Randall

Workers unite

To the Editor,

I'd like to clear up a couple of misconceptions that Colin Stuart and Steve McMillan have about the International Socialists.

First off, in their letter last week they assume that countries calling themselves socialists really are and therefore that we support them. The examples given were China, Stalin's Russia, Eastern Europe, Cuba, and Canada. In fact we support none of these states.

In none of these or other countries calling themselves socialist are working people in control — all of their workplaces and all the decisions related to this, nor of their communities and the vast array of social policy decisions.

Related to this lack of control, the vast majority of people have no way to live but by selling their ability to work, in exchange for a goods that is less than the value of the wage and services produced. Hence, a huge por-

tion of the wealth that working people alone create is siphoned off by the tiny minority who own and/or control the factories, mines, offices, agribusinesses, etc.

This is exploitation, whether it's done by the state, as in so-called socialist countries or by private corporations, as in so-called democratic countries. Around the globe, this minority capitalist ruling class, among other things, lives a grotesquely lavish life, sustains a deadly and mammoth arms trade, and would rather dump millions of tons of food to keep prices up than give it to the starving who can't pay for it.

The only revolution we believe to be a successful workers' revolution occurred in Russia in 1917 and survived less than a decade. For a variety of concrete historical reasons, this revolution was lost. It was attacked by 14 invading foreign armies and finally put to death by Stalin's counter-revolution.

My response to the second misconception of Colin and Stuart is implied

above. It is not the socialist workers' party that makes the revolution, the working class does. The system itself forces people to fight back, as we're seeing more and more these days. The point is, what sort of strategy and vision is needed to win a decent life for all? Do we look to the extreme-right Reform Party, to the reformist NDP, to revolution?

A revolutionary workers' party is a party of and for the working class, composed of the most militant and class-conscious workers. Thus it fights against all the forms of scapegoating and oppression that divide us and keep us down, as well as our common exploitation. It is not separate from the working class and must earn in practice the right to lead.

We encourage everyone who hates this global system of wage slavery, its violence and poverty, to join us in the critical task of building a genuinely socialist alternative.

Paula Cornwall, International Socialists